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Nancy's dancers mind their step

Nancy Chismar (foreground) in rehearsal.

By LINDE HOWE-BECK
of The Gazette

You can hear Nancy Chismar's gnashing teeth throughout the dance studio.

It's a little more subtle than her screeching, her cat calls and a strange trill that leaps out of her throat when she's *very* displeased.

"SsttOOOp."

The dancers come to a halt. Chismar is grinning like a pixie as usual. She has a good-natured way of indicating her displeasure and nobody takes it personally. After all, it's just a couple of days into a hectic rehearsal schedule for four reconstructed Broadway show dances with Chismar, envoy of the American Dance Machine.

Les Ballets Jazz, Canada's one and only professional jazz company, which has no equal in the U.S. either, is in rehearsal. In the past couple of years it has changed from being devoted to creating its own choreographers to becoming a repertory company concerned with dancing about its roots — jazz.

To do this, it has recruited different American choreographers who have worked with jazz greats from the past or contemporary choreographers like Lynn Taylor-Corbett and Judith Marcuse, who are also making new pieces for the company.

Despite minimal support from the Quebec government — just how far could last year's $5,000 take a company of 14 which makes annual international tours on both sides of the Atlantic? — and none at all from Ottawa, which does not fund jazz dance, Les Ballets Jazz makes its way among the best by winning an enviable reputation for full houses and exciting dancers.

Recently the company was asked by Toronto Dance Theatre, a modern dance company which receives $150,000 annually from the Canada Council, to dance Peter Randazzo's *Light Brigade*. This work was made for the Toronto company but Randazzo feels it needs interpretation by more up-tempo dancers. TDT will perform at Place des Arts Oct. 2 and 3 with Les Ballets Jazz as its guests.

The company has made another coup lately too. It is about to become the first company in the world to perform jazz works from the archives of New York's American Dance Machine.

Since 1972, Dance Machine has worked at reconstructing the best Broadway dances with the help of those who performed in them or who saw them. Chismar, one of its dancers and teachers, is teaching the Montreal company numbers such as Agnes De Mille's *Mamie*, Charleston and *All Aboard for Broadway* from the musical *The Boyfriend*, and Carol Haney's *Satin Doll*, which will be danced across Canada and seen at Place des Arts next February and March when the company performs there.

Dance Machine has drawn the line at these dances crossing the Atlantic this fall when Les Ballets Jazz performs in France and Italy. The New York company plans a European tour next year and doesn't want the Montrealers to steal its glory.

Nancy Chismar is working hard trying to mold the various styles of dances she is teaching on to the bodies of Ballets Jazz dancers.

Although she throws her lengthy vocabulary of animal grunts to them, pounding her high heels into the wood floor, taking every part in song and dance and communicating with an extraordinary energy, the excitement and verve that lit Broadway movement a couple of decades ago, she is really very pleased with the dancers.

"*First* of all, I have to get their French accents out of their singing," she laughs heartily. For *Charleston*, the dancers have to act and sing, the boys with an American accent, the girls with an English one. Chismar herself switches vocal roles as easily as she dances.

She grew up in New Jersey, appearing with her father in charity minstrel shows. Her older sister — "she was clumsy" — took ballet lessons and by the time Nancy was three she was moving to everything, so her parents gave in and enrolled her too. Soon she was in vaudeville with her father.

Now 24, with a photographic memory for every role in the 40 dances Dance Machine has in its repertoire, Chismar says hers is like a story from *A Chorus Line*.

"I did everything — cheerleading, twirling, skating, piano."

This kind of life takes tremendous energy, the sort that comes naturally to Chismar.

Her dynamic output when simply teaching is staggering. She breaks in a pant for cigarettes and coffee. "This is nothing, I really push myself when I'm rehearsing, I'm as strong as a horse — and it doesn't take food."

YOU BE THE CRITIC
The column where readers have their say

Rodriguez' reviews compare with best

Inspired by Mr. Xistris' letter of September 7 supporting Juan Rodriguez, I am finally writing to tell you how great we (my husband and I) think he is. We've been meaning to do it for years, and now, in the face of a barrage of criticism from his often puerile detractors, we feel we really must.

We follow the music scene in several well-regarded music publications. Rodriguez' reviews compare favorably with the best of what they publish. He is remarkably "cool" for a rock writer, independent, and seemingly uninfluenced by hype and the prevailing opinions among his peers.

Above all, Juan can write. Some of his analogies ("they sounded like a . . . ") have been very apt and funny.

We always seek out his column in your pages, and have grown to trust his few, unreserved recommendations.

Please, *please*, don't let irascible, partisan fans keep you from keeping on with Juan!

NAN S. KRAFT
N.D.G.

Juan: Not everybody likes your precious disco

That is it! We have had enough of your Juan Rodriguez. Sure, we're a bit late to complain about his ridiculous write-up of the Kiss concert (Aug. 7), but we feel that our fellow Kiss Army members said what we had to say perfectly (Aug. 17).

We realize that Mr. Rodriguez does not like rock. That is to his advantage. However, he seems to think that everyone loves his precious disco and praises it constantly while putting down rock.

Well, Mr. Rodriguez, prepare for a shock, for we know a great deal of people who dislike the unceasing beat of disco, with its five word lyrics. How's that!

We mean no disrespect, but we cannot comprehend why a person like Mr. Rodriguez is a critic of the amazing rock world of entertainment when he seems to be quite content writing up on his beloved Bee Gees.

Corina Stonebanks
Sarah Dixon
Marissa Menezes

Rodriguez sounds like an old man of about 70

After having read Juan Rodriguez' column on the Bee Gees concert, I can honestly say that I am sure he is a cynical old man of about 70 years old.

A good critic is supposed to be objective and look at a performance through the eyes of the public and not just through a personal viewpoint.

This is not the first time I've felt that Rodriguez' column was written using a personal view and not taking into consideration the audience's response to that particular performance.

From what I felt and the feeling of others that I went to the concerts with, we felt that the performances were fantastic, enthralling, colorful, well displayed, and brilliantly executed.

Laurel Leduc
Montreal

It was a privilege to see National's Swan Lake

We were privileged to see the Canadian National Ballet Company's performance of *Swan Lake*, with Frank Augustyn and Vanessa Harwood dancing the principal roles. For us it was a superb and memorable evening viewing a production that was exquisitely staged and costumed.

It was not, for us, a 'tacky production', but one of which Canadians can be justly proud. Admittedly, there were some faults, but the sensitive and beautiful performances of the two principals were highly commendable.

We were dismayed, therefore, to read the headline 'National Ballet's Swan Lake an embarrassment, disaster' (Gazette, Sept. 7). We also consider that Linde Howe-Beck's lukewarm appraisal of Vanessa Harwood's moving performance was unjustifiably critical.

The audience certainly did not share the views expressed in this article.

ANN and PAUL TOMILINSON
Montreal

Review of Swan Lake a disgrace and an insult

'Linde Howe-Beck's review of the opening night of the National Ballet's *Swan Lake* was a disgrace and an insult to both the responsible critics who grace your pages and those who witnessed the show.

A disaster, indeed! Who IS Linde Howe-Beck? A war correspondent? My reading of the definition of the word 'disaster' is; 'Sudden or great misfortune, calamity.'

I am sure, by the response, that the audience considered it their GOOD fortune to witness the performance. The company MAY have been a bit rusty for opening night. But a DISASTER!

Poor girl!

ROBIN SALTERI
Montreal

Bravo for Bruce Bailey!

At last, someone who feels more or less the same as I. Like Bruce Bailey in Montreal. I saw *A Chorus Line* in New York and thought it the lousiest show ever.

MICHAEL SAMUELSOHN
Montreal

The Gazette welcomes your letters on all aspects of the world of entertainment — and any comments on our critics. Send them to: You Be The Critic, Entertainments Dept., The Gazette, P.O. Box 6036, Montreal.

WHAT'S ON WEEKEND

THEATRE

The Prisoner of Second Avenue, written by Neil Simon and directed by David Spencer continues at the Actor's Studio, 7050 Victoria. Tonight through Sun., until Oct. 14th, 8:30 p.m. 342-4591.

Ain't Misbehavin' at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts, tonight, 8 p.m.; tomorrow, 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.; Sun., 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. The musical based on songs written by and/or made famous by jazzman *Fats Waller*. Tickets, $6 to $13.50, on sale at the PdA box office, 842-2112.

CODCO presents The Waning Moon Cafe (or *the Ed Sullivan show*) at The Centaur Theatre, 453 St. Francois-Xavier St. in Old Montreal. Tonight, 8 p.m.; tomorrow, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tickets, $5 and $6.50; students, $3.50 and $4. 288-1229.

Tout Seul Comme Deux presented by Le Theatre Petit a Petit at Le Cafe Nelligan, 550 Dorchester Blvd. Cast includes Pierre Leblanc and Claude Poissant; directed by Annie Gascon, runs until Sept. 30. Tonight through Sun., 8:30 p.m. 288-9535.

Balconville, directed by Guy Sprung at The Centaur Theatre, 453 St. Francois Xavier St. in Old Montreal, continuing until Sept. 29th. Tonight, 8:30 p.m.; tomorrow, 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.; Sun., 7:30 p.m. 288-1229.

Le Tarot starring the Gremar-Farlang company, at The Versailles Room of The Windsor Hotel, Peel St. This reprise of the company's original musical revue runs tonight and Sun. Admission, $20, includes a full-course meal, $5 for the show only. Dinner, 7:30 p.m. and show at 8 p.m. For tickets and reservations call, 866-9611 or 849-0568.

Harold et Maude at Theatre du Rideau Vert, 4664 St. Denis St. continuing until Sept. 29th. Tonight, 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m. 844-1793.

La Collection de Madame Suzanne at Cafe de la Place, continues until Oct. 20. Tonight and tomorrow, 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Tickets, $5.50. 842-2141, ext. 365.

Cold Storage at the Saidye Bronfman Centre, 5170 Cote St. Catherine Rd. Ronald Ribman's profound and amusing script is directed by Sean Mulcahy. Tickets available at the box office. Tomorrow, 8:30 p.m.; Sun., 7:30 p.m. 739-7944.

La Poudriere, Ile Ste. Helene. Alan Ayckbourn's caustic comedy *Absent Friends*, continues until Sept. 29th. Tonight, 8:30 p.m.; tomorrow, 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. 526-0821.

La Peur Surtout at Le Theatre Experimental des Femmes, 320 Notre-Dame St. 2nd floor. Tonight and tomorrow, 9 p.m., continues until Oct. 6th. Tickets, $3. 879-1306.

CLUBS

Gringos, 1471 Crescent St., downstairs. **Sun.:** Daphne Lindmar, starting at 9 p.m. 288-2651.

Frier's Pub, 1445 Crescent St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Night Shift. **Sun.:** Short Notice. Showtime: 9:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. 849-9086.

The Maples, 121 Lakeshore Rd. in Pointe Claire. **Tonight:** Stephen Barry Blues Band. **Tomorrow and Sun.:** Liverpool. 694-2479.

Le Pretzel Enchaine, 2112 Clark St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** The Next. **Sun.:** The Secrets. Tickets for both shows $3. 286-9075.

Rainbow Bar & Grill, 1436 Stanley St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Big City Band. 849-8262.

The Mustache, 1445 Closse St. **Tonight through Sun.:** Storm Crow. 931-2575.

Stitches, 1470 Crescent St. **Sun.:** Standup comedy. Showtimes: 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Admission $3. For auditions, phone 842-3713.

L'Imprevu, 446 Place Jacques Cartier in Old Montreal. **Tonight through Sun.:** Figgy Duff. 878-9397.

Lancer Pub, 1240 Drummond St. **Tonight through Sun.:** Carl Peterson, Andy Vine and Duke Walker. First set at 9 p.m. Free admission. 866-6492.

Yakitty-Yak, 1240 Drummond St. **Tonight through Sun.:** Gary Gleam. 866-6492.

Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Tex Konig. Doors open at 8 p.m. 392-4947.

Rising Sun, 286 St. Catherine St. **Tonight through Sun.:** Art Blakey. 861-0657.

St. James Pub, 1197 University St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Richard Duffy. 861-4662.

The Hunter's Horn, 1214 Peel St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** The Clahanes. 861-8022.

L'Air du Temps, 191 St. Paul St. in Old Montreal. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Terry King and John Tank Quartet. **Sun.:** Steve Holt. Admission, $2. 842-2003.

Salle Bonaventure, Queen Elizabeth Hotel. City Lights Revue featuring Roxanna Ward. Shows at 9:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., tonight; 9:30 p.m. and midnight, tomorrow. 861-3511.

Cock 'n Bull Pub, 1944 St. Catherine St. W. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Bowser and Blue. **Sun.:** Al Peter's Dixieland Band, 9 p.m. 933-4555.

The Piccadilly, Sheraton Mount Royal Hotel, Peel St. **Tonight through Sun.:** Dancing with The Royals, featuring singer Lorraine Foster. 842-7777.

Broadway Live, 1459 St. Alexander St. **Tonight and tomorrow:** Geraldine Hunt. 843-3033.

FRIDAY

ETCETERA

Quebec Singers and Actors will perform for the benefit for the Boat People, St. Denis Theatre, 1594 St. Denis St. Tickets, on sale at the box office and Simpsons stores. 527-2165.

Corn boil and live music will be featured from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. at 70 Belmont Ave. in Pointe Claire.

Benefit Show — The National Arts Centre in Ottawa presents *Project 4000 Benefit Show* for refugees throughout the world. Tickets, $5 to $10, on sale at the box office. (613) 996-5051.

Rug Hooking Exhibition at Centennial Hall, 288 Beaconsfield Blvd. from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free admission. 695-9155.

REPERTORY

Cinema V (489-5559) Heaven Can Wait, 7; Up in Smoke, 7:15; Richard Pryor Live in Concert, 9:15; Midnight Express, 9:45; Rocky Horror Picture Show, midnight.

Cinematheque Quebecois (844-8734) Black on White, 7:30; Portraits of Women, 9:30

Conservatory Cinematographic Art (879-4349) The Front Page, 7; Cleopatra, 9.

Ouimetoscope (525-8600) L'Invasion des Profanateurs, 7:15, 9:30; L'Age de Cristal, 7, 9:15.

Outremont (277-4145) A Film About Jimi Hendrix, 7; Lord of the Rings, 9:30.

L'Imprevu (878-9397) L'Epouvantail, 6:30.

SATURDAY

MUSIC

Centre d'Art du Mont Royal presents Janine von Herbstreit, contralto; and Kenneth Jimenez tenor; performing works by Verdi, Lehar, Massenet, Mozart, Chopin, Schubert, Weill and Ives from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. 872-2162.

ETCETERA

Concordia University presents Ralph Allison in *Dreams and Desires*, a mime and clown show, 8 p.m. at the Douglass Clarke Burns Theatre, 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. Tickets, $3, students, $2. 879-2852.

The Baie D'Urfe Pottery Guild is holding its Beach Sale from noon to 5 p.m. on the beach opposite the Whiteside Taylor Centre, 20551 Lakeshore Rd.

Mad Dash will be taping at 2:15 and 6:45. Tickets may be obtained at the reception desk, 405 Ogilvy Ave. or by phoning 273-6311.

REPERTORY

Cinema V (489-5559) 101 Dalamations, 4:30; Midnight Express, 7; Coming Home, 7:15; The Champ, 9:15; The Buddy Holly Story, 9:45; It's Alive, midnight.

Conservatory of Cinematographic Art (879-4349) Cleopatra, 7.

L'Imprevu (878-9397) Moby Dick, 6:30.

Ouimetoscope (525-8600) La Femme Libre, 2, 4:30, 7, 9:30; Diabolo Menthe, 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15.

Outremont (277-4145) A Film About Jimi Hendrix, 7; Lord of the Rings, 9:30.

Seville (932-1139) The Main Event, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, 9:30; Led Zeppelin: The Song Remains The Same, midnight.

SUNDAY

MUSIC

The Little Singers of Mount Royal under the direction of Gilbert Patenaude perform *Missa Quarti Toni* by Victoria 11 a.m. at St. Joseph's Oratory, 3800 Queen Mary Rd. Also, organist, Raymond Daveluy performs at 3:30 p.m. 733-8211.

LECTURE

Symposium on Montreal landscape artist William Brymner from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Seven specialists will speak on various topics related to Brymner's works. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 3400 Musee Ave.

ETCETERA

Antique Auction Sale on Ile Bizard at the Cultural Centre, 490 de L'Eglise St. at 12:30 p.m. For information, 697-7077.

Walking Tour of the Waterfront at 2:30 p.m. The bilingual one-hour tour will begin at the main entrance of Bonsecours Market and end at Place d'Youville. 283-4651.

Walking Tour with Save Montreal begins at 2 p.m., Lafontaine's statue in Lafontaine Park near Sherbrooke St.

Ladies Auxiliary of Mount Sinai Hospital Mini Bazaar from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 5940 Victoria Ave. Free admission. 342-1440.

REPERTORY

Cinema V (489-5559) 101 Dalamations, 4:30; Coming Home, 7; Heaven Can Wait, 7:15; Midnight Express, 9:15; A Night Full of Rain, 9:45.

Conservatory of Cinematographic Art (879-4349) The Big Sleep, (1946 version), 7; The Big Sleep, (1977 version), 9.

Ouimetoscope (525-8600) La Femme Libre, 2, 4:30, 7, 9:30; Un Moment d'Egarement, 2, 3:45, 5:30, 7:15, 9.

Outremont (277-4145) L'Invasion des Profanateurs, 7; La Publicite en Cannes, 9:30.

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